

Pediatric Nutrition—Back to Basics



Nutrition plays an important role in the growth and development in children, but parents and children are bombarded with a barrage of food options that can impede the nutritional wellness of a child. To help take the guesswork out of these choices, and assist parents in making wise food choices, we suggest getting back to basics:

*Focus on **whole foods** that maximize healthy food choices*

- What are whole foods? Simply, whole foods are foods that have not been overly processed and typically have a single ingredient.
- Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, and lean meats are all whole foods
- Consume a **wide variety** of nutritionally rich whole foods and beverages

Cooking and baking from scratch using whole foods

- Provides a great opportunity for parents to teach children how to cook/bake and to make wise food decisions
- Consider substituting refined sugar with molasses or honey, and substituting a portion of white refined flour with whole wheat flour
- Use butter or olive oil instead of margarine or hydrogenated oils

Reading nutrition information food labels on processed food packages

- Ingredients are listed in the order of the most to the least amounts
- To be labeled “whole grain”, the whole grain should be listed as the first ingredient
- Limit the amount of foods fortified with additives, preservatives and food dyes (some studies suggest that children with ADHD may have an intolerance to compounds in foods that increase their behavior problems)*
- Look for foods that are low in trans fats (hydrogenated oils), cholesterol, sodium and refined sugar (corn syrup, ends with –ose, high fructose corn syrup...)

*Jill Weisenberger, MS RD CDE; www.kidseatright.org; [Food Color Additives and ADHD: Is There a Link?](#)